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For

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SELECTIVE INJECTION OR FLOW CONTROL WITH THROUGH-TUBING OPERATION CAPACITY

By

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Related Applications. The present application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application no. 09/441,701 filed November 16, 1999 which claims priority to U.S. Provisional application no. 60/108,810 filed November 17, 1998.

Field of Invention. The present invention relates to subsurface well equipment and, more particularly, to a method and apparatus for remotely controlling injection or production fluids in well completions which may include gravel pack.

Description of the Related Art. As is well known to those skilled in the art, certain hydrocarbon producing formations include sand. Unless filtered out, such sand can become entrained or commingled with the hydrocarbons that are produced to the earth's surface. This is sometimes referred to as "producing sand", and can be undesirable for a number of reasons, including added production costs, and erosion of well tools within the completion, which could lead to the mechanical malfunctioning of such tools. Various approaches to combating this problem have been developed. For example, the industry has developed sand screens which are connected to the production tubing adjacent the producing formation to prevent sand from entering the production tubing. In those cases where sand screens alone will not sufficiently filter out the sand, the industry has learned that a very effective way of filtering sand from entry into the production tubing is to fill, or pack, the well annulus with gravel, hence the term "gravel pack" completions.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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Figures 1A-1I taken together form a longitudinal sectional view of a specific embodiment of the flow control device of the present invention.

5 Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 3-3 of Figure 1E.

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Figure 4 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 4-4 of Figure 1E.

Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 5-5 of Figure 1E.

Figure 6 illustrates a planar projection of an outer cylindrical surface of a position holder shown in Figures 1C and 1D.

10 Figure 7 is a partial elevation view taken along line 7-7 of Figure 11.

Figure 8 is a longitudinal sectional view, similar to Figures 1A and 1B, showing an upper portion of another specific embodiment of the flow control device of the present invention.

Figure 9 is a longitudinal sectional view, similar to Figure 8, showing an upper portion of another specific embodiment of the flow control device of the present invention.

Figure 10 is a schematic representation of a specific embodiment of a well completion in which the flow control device of the present invention may be used.

Figure 11 is a partial cross sectional view of an alternative embodiment of the
20 present invention.

Figure 12 is a partial cross sectional view of an alternative embodiment of the present invention.

While the invention will be described in connection with the preferred embodiments, it will be understood that it is not intended to limit the invention to those embodiments. On the contrary, it is intended to cover all alternatives, modifications, and equivalents as may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

For the purposes of this description, the terms “upper” and “lower,” “up hole” and “downhole” and “upwardly” and “downwardly” are relative terms to indicate position and direction of movement in easily recognized terms. Usually, these terms are relative to a line drawn from an upmost position at the earth’s surface to a point at the center of the earth, and would be appropriate for use in relatively straight, vertical wellbores. However, when the wellbore is highly deviated, such as from about 60 degrees from vertical, or horizontal, these terms do not make sense and therefore should not be taken as limitations. These terms are only used for ease of understanding as an indication of what the position or movement would be if taken within a vertical wellbore.

Referring to the drawings in detail, wherein like numerals denote identical elements throughout the several views, a specific embodiment of the downhole flow

control device of the present invention is referred to generally by the numeral **10**.

Referring initially to Figure **1A**, the device **10** may include a generally cylindrical body member **12** having a first bore (or first passageway) **14** extending from a first end **16** of the body member **12** and through a generally cylindrical extension member **17** (Figures **1E-1I**) disposed within the body member **12**, and a second bore (or second passageway) **18** extending from a second end **20** of the body member **12** and into an annular space **21** disposed about the extension member **17**. In a specific embodiment, the diameter of the second bore **18** is greater than the diameter of the first bore **14**. As shown in Figure **1E**, the body member **12** may also include a first valve seat **22** disposed within the first bore **14**, and the extension member **17** may include at least one flow port **24** establishing fluid communication between the annular space **21** and the first bore **14**.

With reference to Figures **1B-1F**, the device **10** may further include a first generally cylindrical sleeve member **26** movably disposed and remotely shiftable within the first bore **14**. The manner in which the first sleeve member **26** is shifted within the first bore **14** will be described below. Referring to Figure **1E**, the first sleeve member **26** may include a second valve seat **28** adapted for cooperable sealing engagement with the first valve seat **22** to regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port **24**. The first sleeve member **26** may also include at least one flow slot **30**.

As shown in Figure **1H**, the device **10** may further include a closure member **32** disposed for movement between an open and a closed position to control fluid

flow through the first bore 14. The closure member 32 is shown in its closed position. In a specific embodiment, the closure member 32 may be a flapper having an arm 34 hingedly connected to the extension member 17. The flapper 32 may be biased into its closed position by a hinge spring 36. Other types of closure members 32 are within the scope of the present invention, including, for example, a ball valve.

As shown in Figures 1F-1H, the device 10 may further include a second sleeve member 38 movably disposed and remotely shiftable within the first bore 14 to move the closure member 32 between its open and closed positions. As shown in Figure 1E, the second sleeve member 38 may include an inner surface 40 having a locking profile 42 disposed therein for mating with a shifting tool (not shown). As shown in Figure 1G, the second sleeve member 38 may also include at least one rib 44 that is shown engaged with a first annular recess 46 in the first bore 14 of the extension member 17. In a specific embodiment, the second sleeve member 38 may include a plurality of ribs 44 disposed on a plurality of collet sections 48 in the second sleeve member 38 that may be disposed between a plurality of slots 50 in the second sleeve member 38. As will be more fully discussed below, the second sleeve member 38 may be shifted downwardly to engage the ribs 44 with a second annular recess 47 in the first bore 14 of the extension member 17. The second sleeve member 38 may further include at least one first equalizing port 52 for cooperating with at least one second equalizing port 54 in the extension member 17 to equalize pressure above and below the flapper 32 prior to shifting the second sleeve member

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With reference to Figures 11 and 7, the device 10 may further include a cone member 60 connected to a distal end 62 of the extension member 17. In a specific embodiment, the cone member 60 may include a first and a second half-cone member 64 and 66, each of which may be hingedly attached to the distal end 62 of the extension member 17, as by a first and a second hinge pin 68 and 70, respectively, and biased towards each other, as by first and second hinge springs 72 and 74, respectively. The springs 72 and 74 bias and hold the half-cone members 64 and 66 in mating relationship, or in a normally-closed position, to form a cone, as shown in Figure 11. In this normally-closed position, the cone member 60 directs fluid flowing from the second end 20 of the body member 12 into the annular space 21, and functions to minimize turbulence as fluid flows into the annular space 21. In this regard, in a preferred embodiment, an angle α formed between a first outer surface 65 of the first half-cone member 64 and a second outer surface 67 of the second half-cone member 66 may be approximately forty-four (44) degrees when the half-cone members 64 and 66 are biased towards each other to form a cone, as

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5 In a specific embodiment, as shown in Figure 1A, the biasing mechanism may include a source of pressurized gas, such as pressurized nitrogen, which may be contained within a sealed chamber, such as a gas conduit 82. An upper portion 84 of the gas conduit 82 may be coiled within a housing 85 formed within the body member 12, and a lower portion 86 of the gas conduit 82 (Figure 1B) may extend outside the body member 12 and terminate at a fitting 88 connected to the body member 12. The gas conduit 82 is in fluid communication with a second side 90 of the piston 76, such as through a second passageway 92 in the body member 12. Appropriate seals are provided to contain the pressurized gas. As shown in Figure 3, the body member 12 may include a charging port 94, which may include a dill core valve, through which pressurized gas may be introduced into the device 10.

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member 12', and is in fluid communication with the second side 90' of the piston 76', such as through the second passageway 92' in the body member 12'. As such, in this embodiment, hydraulic fluid is used instead of pressurized gas to bias the first sleeve member 26' towards the first end 16' of the body member 12'.

5 Another biasing mechanism is shown in Figure 9, which is a view similar to Figure 8, and illustrates an upper portion of another specific embodiment of the present invention, which is referred to generally by the numeral 10". The lower portion of this embodiment is as shown in Figures 1C-1I. In this embodiment, a spring 98 is disposed within the first bore 14", about the first sleeve member 26", and between an annular shoulder 100 on the body member 12" and the second side 90" of the piston 76". As such, in this embodiment, force of the spring 98 is used instead of pressurized gas or hydraulic fluid to bias the first sleeve member 26" toward the first end 16" of the body member 12". Alternatively, as shown in Figure 9, the device 10" may also include a port 102 in the body member 12" connected to a conduit 104 through which hydraulic fluid or pressurized gas may also be applied to the second side 90" of the piston 76" to assist the spring 98 in biasing the first sleeve member 26" toward the first end 16" of the body member 12". In this regard, if hydraulic fluid is desired, the conduit 104 may be a hydraulic conduit, such as the second hydraulic conduit 96 shown in Figure 8. Alternatively, if pressurized gas is desired, the conduit 104 may be a gas conduit, such as the gas conduit 82 shown in Figures 1A-1B. In another specific embodiment, instead of using hydraulic fluid or

Referring now to Figures 1C-1D and 6, the device 10 of the present invention may also include a position holder to enable an operator at the earth's surface (not shown) to remotely locate and maintain the first sleeve member 26 in a plurality of discrete positions, thereby providing the operator with the ability to remotely regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port 24 in the extension member 17 (Figure 1E), and/or through the at least one flow slot 30 in the first sleeve member 26 (Figure 1E). The position holder may be provided in a variety of configurations. In a specific embodiment, as shown in Figures 1C-1D and 6, the position holder may include an indexing cylinder 106 having a recessed profile 108 (Figure 6), and be adapted so that a retaining member 110 (Figure 1D) may be biased into cooperable engagement with the recessed profile 108, as will be more fully explained below. In a specific embodiment, one of the position holder 106 and the retaining member 110 may be connected to the first sleeve member 26, and the other of the position holder 106 and the retaining member 110 may be connected to the body member 12. In a specific embodiment, the recessed profile 108 may be formed in the first sleeve member 26, or it may be formed in the indexing cylinder 106 disposed about the first sleeve member 26. In this embodiment, the indexing cylinder 106 and the first sleeve member 26 are fixed to each other so as to prevent longitudinal movement

relative to each other. As to relative rotatable movement between the two, however, the indexing cylinder **106** and the first sleeve member **26** may be fixed so as to prevent relative rotatable movement between the two, or the indexing cylinder **106** may be slidably disposed about the first sleeve member **26** so as to permit relative rotatable movement. In the specific embodiment shown in Figure **1C-1D**, in which the recessed profile **108** is formed in the indexing cylinder **106**, the indexing cylinder **106** is disposed for rotatable movement relative to the first sleeve member **26**, as per roller bearings **112** and **114**, and ball bearings **116** and **118**.

In a specific embodiment, with reference to Figure **1C-1D**, the retaining member **110** may include an elongate body **120** having a cam finger **122** at a distal end thereof and a hinge bore **124** at a proximal end thereof. A hinge pin **126** is disposed within the hinge bore **124** and connected to the body member **12**. In this manner, the retaining member **110** may be hingedly connected to the body member **12**. A biasing member **128**, such as a spring, may be provided to bias the retaining member **110** into engagement with the recessed profile **108**. Other embodiments of the retaining member **110** are within the scope of the present invention. For example, the retaining member **110** may be a spring-loaded detent pin (not shown).

The recessed profile **108** will now be described with reference to Figure **6**, which illustrates a planar projection of the recessed profile **108** in the indexing cylinder **106**. As shown in Figure **6**, the recessed profile **108** preferably includes a plurality of axial slots **130** of varying length disposed circumferentially around the

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In operation, the first sleeve member **26** is normally biased upwardly, so that the cam finger **122** of the retaining member **110** is positioned against the bottom of the lower portion **132** of one of the axial slots **130**. When it is desired to change the position of the first sleeve member **26**, hydraulic pressure should be applied from the first hydraulic conduit **78** (Figure **1B**) to the first side **80** of the piston **76** for a period long enough to shift the cam finger **122** into engagement with the recessed upper portion **134** of the axial slot **130**. Hydraulic pressure should then be removed so that the first sleeve member **26** is biased upwardly, thereby causing the cam finger **122** to engage the inclined shoulder **136** and move up the upwardly ramped slot **138** and into the lower portion **132** of the immediately neighboring axial slot **130** having a

5 **130** having the desired length corresponding to the desired position of the first sleeve member **26**. This enables an operator at the earth's surface to shift the first sleeve member **26** into a plurality of discrete positions and control the distance between the first and second valve seats **22** and **28** (Figure **1E**), and thereby regulate fluid flow through the at least one flow port **24** and/or the at least one flow slot **30**.

10 Methods of using the flow control device **10** of the present invention will be
now be explained in connection with a specific embodiment of a well completion
denoted generally by the numeral **140**, as illustrated in Figure **10**. Referring now to
Figure **10**, the well completion **140** may include a production tubing **142** extending
from the earth's surface (not shown) and disposed within a well casing **144**, with a
15 first packer **146** connected to the tubing **142** and disposed above a first hydrocarbon
formation **148**, and a second packer **150** connected to the tubing **142** and disposed
between the first hydrocarbon formation **148** and a second hydrocarbon formation
152. A well annulus **154** may be packed with gravel **155**. A first sand screen **156**
may be connected to the tubing **142** adjacent the first formation **148**, and a second
20 sand screen **158** may be connected to the tubing **142** adjacent the second formation
152. A first flow control device **10a** of the present invention may be connected to

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The flow control device **10** of the present invention may be used to produce hydrocarbons from a formation, such as formation **148** or **152**, to the earth's surface, or to inject chemicals from the earth's surface (not shown) into the well annulus **154**, and/or into a hydrocarbon formation, such as formation **148** or **152**. If the device **10** is to be used for producing fluids, then the device **10** should be positioned with the first end **16** of the device **10** (Figure **1A**) above the second end **20** of the device **10** (Figure **1I**). But if the device **10** is to be used to inject chemicals, then the device **10** should be positioned "upside down" so that the second end **20** is above the first end **16**.

Figure **11** discloses an alternative embodiment of the present invention. As shown in the figure, the device **10** has a body **12** defining a first bore **14** therethrough. A second bore **18** in the annular space **21** of the body **12** provides an alternate pathway through the body **12**. As in the previously described embodiment, flow through the second bore **18**, which may be annular or one or more discrete passageways in the annular space **21**, is controlled by a sleeve valve. The sleeve valve comprises a sleeve member **26** having a plurality of sleeve ports **200** therein (the sleeve ports may be replaced by the flow slots **30** of the previous embodiments or other similar openings). However, in the embodiment shown in Figure **11**, the sleeve ports **200** comprise a plurality of discrete holes through the sleeve member **26**.

The sleeve ports **200** have a size selected to produce a specific flow area when opened to the flow port(s) **24** between the first bore **14** and the second bore(s) **18**.

approximately at least as great as the flow area of the first bore **14** or the second bore **18**. The sleeve ports **200** are spaced longitudinally so that sleeve member may be positioned with the valve seat **22** between sets of sleeve ports **200** to define different preselected flow areas through the sleeve member. The position holder or indexing mechanism shown generally at **202** defines the discrete positions of the sleeve member **26**. The indexing mechanism may be the indexing sleeve described previously, another j-slot type indexer, or some other type of known indexer. Applying and removing pressure to the sleeve member **26** via the control line (or hydraulic conduit) **78** provides for selective positioning of the sleeve member **26**. As mentioned previously, the sleeve member **26** generally has a biasing member such as a pressurized balance gas in a gas conduit **82** to bias the sleeve member **26** in a give direction to facilitate operation.

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the device **10** to, for example, re-enter the well. As an example, a wireline, slickline, or coiled tubing deployed tool could be run through the device **10** when the first bore **13** is open. Likewise, the second bore provides for fluid flow when the first bore **14** is closed and may therefore be referred to as a bypass or bypass flowpath or
5 passageway.

Although described generally as a hydraulically controlled valve, the device could also be controlled electrically by replacing the hydraulic components with motors or solenoids or the like and electrical communication lines.

It is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the exact details of
10 construction, operation, exact materials or embodiments shown and described, as obvious modifications and equivalents will be apparent to one skilled in the art. For example, while the device **10** has been described as being remotely controlled via at least one hydraulic conduit (e.g., conduit **78** in Figure **1A**), the device **10** could just as easily be remotely controlled via an electrical conductor and still be within the
15 scope of the present invention. Additionally, while the device **10** of the present invention has been described for use in well completions which include gravel pack in the well annulus, the device **10** may also be used in well completions lacking gravel pack and still be within the scope of the present invention. Accordingly, the invention is therefore to be limited only by the scope of the appended claims.

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